



## **Stewardship in a Pandemic**

Resources for the Diocese of Huron. April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020

***Ideas and Letter Templates to copy / cut / paste; Theological Reflections;  
Thinking about the impact of Government Subsidies.***

Right now, it is essential to be in close, sensitive communication about Stewardship with our parish members. Remember, Stewardship is about who we are, what we choose to do with what we have, and, therefore, how we respond, as disciples, in this situation. The Gospel shapes what we say and how we say it. So:

- Connect what you say about giving with information about the impact of giving, for ourselves and for others.
- Nudging is more helpful than directing
- Help people understand that ministry continues, and say how ... parishioners are often not well-informed about all the ministry that is going on
- Every parish is different and must customize its own response to this situation and find the most helpful ways to communicate with its people
- Each community has its own particular concerns ... some will worry about feeding families; some will have more folks on stable pensions. You may need to say it is OK to give less; AND, you may invite those who can to give more. Stewardship is what you choose to do with what you have.
- Give as much financial information as you think appropriate while balancing that with the pastoral needs of the community. Communicate with sensitivity and be clear about the numbers. Communicate sooner rather than later.
- Remember, too, we seek to serve our wider communities, reaching out to the isolated, the poor, the hungry, the homeless who cannot shelter in place.

Theological reflections that may inform preaching and other communications:

- Attend to the false dichotomy between economics and health (treasure / heart) ... The Church can lead in helping to restore balance to our thinking about economics and the well-being of the human family
- Economics is how we live together in one house (Gk. *Oikos, oikonomia*) ... house may be understood in more communal, even global, terms - the Temple of God in the world.
- The present economic impacts reveal a spiritual void that the Gospel addresses. Modern economics is driven by scarcity thinking, which drives the impetus towards relentless growth in order to fill manufactured needs
- COVID-19 confronts us with our mortality. This is a scary time and the Gospel is the response of faith to the power of death
- Beautiful things are happening in our communities ... tell these stories for encouragement and inspiration.

## POSSIBLE LETTER TEMPLATES:

### One Parish sent out this letter to the congregation ....

April 2020

Dear [Parish] Family,

Peace be with you all.

This current situation is showing us the value of family, friends and communities. We are all keeping in touch through phone and social media. Thank you to [our Rector] for the daily prayers and readings, keeping us focused on our faith and trust in God, and thank you to those who are also involved in this ministry.

[Our clergy] continues to respond to our spiritual health, but we as a congregation need to respond to the financial health of our church. We have ongoing expenses (salaries, utilities, apportionment, etc), which are met from regular donations. Fortunately, many people have moved to pre-authorized monthly donations, and this is a huge help. However, the regular weekly envelope offerings are an important part of how we pay our bills.

Remember also, that there are people in our community who do not have a lot of resources to weather this situation, especially those who rely on the services of the [local food bank] and other agencies. We at [parish] support the [local outreach program/food bank/soup kitchen], but we are unable to do this at present. However, the needs of the poor and marginalized are still there, even more so. Our donations not only keep this building running, but allow us to be active in the community living the example of Jesus in taking care of those in need.

If you normally make donations when you attend services, and if you are currently able to continue your support, please consider mailing a cheque (not cash) for your offerings as mail is being delivered [insert mailing directions if necessary] and essential banking is being done. Or you can go to [our website and click the Donate Now button/the Diocesan website and click on Donate to Your Parish] and follow the instructions. [You can also click the link on the bottom of your parish email]. Please consider using this method. You will receive a tax receipt through Canada Helps.

*It is not what happens, but it is how we respond that is important.*

Love God, and love our neighbours.

With prayers for everyone's health and safety,

Your wardens,



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## Another Parish used the following letter ....

Subject: Our church doors may not be open but our hearts are

Hello Everyone

Just as we have been doing for the last three years, we will keep on keeping on.

Although we may not be able to be physically in our church building, we are still serving and impacting out community in meaningful ways. Our church doors may not be open but our hearts are.

Taking necessary precautions, our front steps serve as a pick up zone for people who need help. This week we have helped 2 members of our surrounding community with personal care packages. Assisted 3 families with canned food, meat and perishables. Supplied reading material for a member of our youth group who lives on her own. And we helped Community Living London by donating a large number of jigsaw puzzle for their clients.

Our church however now needs our help in order for us to continue to serve our community. If you are in a position to continue making your weekly donations or a lump sum gift, there are a number of ways to do it.

1. Simply mail your cheque(s) for your weekly givings to the church. Peggy and Mary are checking the mail regularly.
2. Sign up for Preauthorized Giving – form attached. Mail the completed form along with a void cheque to Hayley at Huron Church House 190 Queens Ave London, ON N6A 6H7
3. or by donating online. It is simple - click the link below and fill in the blanks

*(insert here your parishes CanadaHelps link)*

Thank you to all of you for walking in faith as we travel this time of uncertainty.



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## Another parish used the following letter ....

\_\_\_\_\_, 2020

Dear Friends, Members of \_\_\_\_\_,

The Wardens and I want to affirm that God is our constant companion especially in this time of uncertainty and upheaval in all of our lives. We also want to reassure you that we are acting in what we consider to be the best interests of our parish community.

Provisions are being made - and a lot is already being done - to ensure some key goals are met:

- **Excellent communication** by e-mail, telephone and letters ... (*provide details*)
- **Consistent pastoral support** ... (*details of what is happening*) Please let us know of any concerns or needs you may have. It is part of our calling to take care of one another and those around us.
- **Concrete assistance** - If you need help with groceries or medication pick-up from the pharmacy, we have a team of volunteers (thank you to them!) who are ready to assist you. Just call the office ( \_\_\_\_\_ ). Or if you are low on food and other necessities and also low on resources, please call \_\_\_\_\_ ( \_\_\_\_\_ ). We will do our best to assist you.
- **Sunday Worship and Daily Prayer** - (*details of provisions being made*). If you have an e-mail address and do not yet receive worship or prayer resources, but would like to, please call the office ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) and ask for your e-mail to be added to the distribution list.

This letter is also to keep you informed about our financial situation. Just as many individuals, families and businesses are being adversely affected financially by the economic impacts of the coronavirus epidemic, so also the Church may suffer adverse effects and we want to guard against that as much as we can.

We can report that, of our monthly offerings of about \$\_\_\_\_\_, roughly \$\_\_\_\_\_ (about \_\_%) comes in through Pre-Authorized Givings and Credit Cards. This is a very (*what word is appropriate for you? ... reassuring, comforting, troubling, critical*) scenario for us in the present circumstances because consistency of giving even when there is no church service on Sundays helps us meet our obligations, which continue - salaries, apportionment to the Diocese, capital and maintenance costs and contracts.

We need to attend to a potential loss of revenue of \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month that comes in on the collection plate, in addition to the more than \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month lost because our hall rentals have temporarily stopped.

If this crisis were to be only for a few weeks, we could sustain things. However, if it extends into months - as now appears possible - we will face considerable financial challenges in meeting our obligations. We deeply appreciate the generosity of all who are supporting the



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ministry of the church to the best of their ability. We are also appealing to the parish community about three things:

- If you are not already on Pre-Authorized Giving and you are able to move your offerings to an automatic debit, please notify the office ( ) that you would like \_\_\_\_\_, our envelope secretary, to give you a call;
- If you prefer to continue to give by envelope givings, please mail your envelope as regularly as you can to the church, at: (*address*). Or, call the office and arrange for pick-up by one of our volunteers;
- If you have the financial means to increase your offering temporarily during the time of this pandemic, please send your additional gifts to: (*address*).

All of these strategies will greatly assist in ensuring not only that we emerge from this pandemic strongly, but also that we build a firm foundation for our financial future.

We always seek to serve our church community and the wider \_\_\_\_\_ community to the best of our ability. This crisis has presented new challenges and new opportunities and also a very steep learning curve. In many ways, these challenges are good for us and will ultimately make us stronger if we do not shrink from them now.

So, let us face this unprecedented challenge to the whole human community with deep trust in God, with compassion and concern for one another and with confidence that, in God, we have One on whom we can always depend.

We as a community exist only to serve the wider community and the world as disciples of the Risen Lord. Now is one of those times when we are called to do so with faith and hope, courage and much love.

Yours sincerely in the Love of Christ,

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## **Canada Helps as one option for giving in your parish**

Please take a look at the attached information about CanadaHelps

### **Thinking about Government Subsidies**

In response to a question about whether there is a risk that subsidies may cause churches to relax on Stewardship, our Committee members responded:

- This is still an opportunity to reach out and ask people to reflect on their support of their parish. The subsidies need not necessarily counteract that. It is wise to explore both congregational giving, and subsidies, as part of the ministry of responsibility for the running of the parish.
- The Diocese of Toronto is presenting its diocesan support for parishes as a “Jubilee”, drawing on the imagery of that cancellation of obligations/liberation from slavery/return of land that was part of that observance in Ancient Israel. We may consider reframing this wage subsidy so that it carries more of that flavour. Many parishes rely heavily on fundraising, and those activities will be curtailed this year. Should we present the subsidy as helping to cover those shortfalls? This subsidy decreases the pressure, but it doesn’t replace the need for people’s offerings.
- The HST rebate is another government program that we understand as reducing the cost of our work without replacing our responsibility to provide the resources for ministry. Is that suggestive of a model for how to talk about the wage subsidy?
- We express some gratitude for this support from our government for all those who work for the betterment of our society through not-for-profits and churches. Our needs from each member are the same, so our message remains for the most part unchanged. The shortfall from fundraising will be significant and this subsidy will help close gaps that would be nearly impossible for some churches to close. Imagine the fundraising that will be condensed into the fall of this year across all of society.
- It would be wonderful if, once we are gathered again, we could have our social events focused around gathering, healing and inviting new relationships into the church (not charging people for anything) - i.e. mission. Imagine this gift from the government as what allows the mission of the church as we move beyond this virus.
- The government has been hit so hard with all the applications for unemployment insurance from those already laid off. This will allow churches to still do what we can even though many people in the congregation have lost their jobs. Many congregations live so close to the edge that stimulated giving by members will still be needed. At least the government included churches so that paid people can continue the ministry in our community without giving up the mark of mission we perform so well! Remember, it will likely take a while for the funds to actually reach us.

These resources and reflections are respectfully offered to parishes for their consideration,

The Stewardship Committee of the Diocese of Huron

(Andra O’Neill Townshend, Kim Van Allen, Matt Kieswetter, Raymond Hodgson, Graham Bland)



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